

Message Text

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ACTION EUR-12

INFO OCT-01 ISO-00 PM-04 L-03 NSC-05 CIAE-00 DODE-00

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EB-07 SAJ-01 CIEP-01 OMB-01 /053 W

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R 251709Z NOV 75

FM AMEMBASSY LONDON

TO SECSTATE WASHDC 6870

INFO AMEMBASSY DUBLIN

AMCONSUL BELFAST

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E.O. 11652: N/A

TAGS: PGOV, PINT UK (NI)

SUBJ: PARLIAMENTARY DEBATE ON TERRORISM IN NORTHERN

IRELAND

REF: LONDON 17406

1. SUMMARY: PARLIAMENTARY DEBATE NOVEMBER 24 ON SITUATION IN NORTHERN IRELAND FOCUSED ON CONSERVATIVES' OPPOSITION TO GOVERNMENT SECURITY POLICY IN SOUTH ARMAGH. END SUMMARY.

2. STANLEY ORME, MINISTER OF STATE, NORTHERN IRELAND OFFICE, GAVE STATEMENT IN PARLIAMENT NOVEMBER 24 ON INCIDENT IN SOUTH ARMAGH NOVEMBER 22 IN WHICH THREE SOLDIERS WERE KILLED AND ONE SERIOUSLY WOUNDED. REPORT OF THE INCIDENT RAISED QUESTION FROM OPPOSITION BENCHES AS TO GOVERNMENT POLICY IN SOUTH ARMAGH, AND OPPOSITION SPOKESMAN AIREY NEAVE DEPLORED STATE OF AFFAIRS IN THAT COUNTY. NEAVE CALLED FOR GOVERNMENT TO ADOPT DECISION TO CLEAR OUT TERRORISM IN SOUTH ARMAGH AND CLAIMED GOVERNMENT'S RELEASE OF TERRORISTS CONTRIBUTED TO THE PROBLEM. ORME ACCUSED NEAVE OF PLAYING POLITICS WITH IRISH SITUATION AND WITH BRITISH ARMY. HE HINTED THAT SECURITY POLICIES

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IN SOUTH ARMAGH ARE LEFT TO BRITISH ARMY AND DEFENDED

GOVERNMENT'S RELEASE OF DETAINEES.

3. FROM BACKBENCHES, LABOR MP WELLBELOVED DEPRECATED CONSERVATIVES "PLOY OF PLAYING PARTY POLITICS WITH THE LIVES OF SOLDIERS" AND STATED INTEREST OF THE HOUSE IN DEBATING STORMONT CONVENTION REPORT. WELLBELOVED SAID SOLUTION FOR TRAGEDY OF NORTHERN IRELAND WOULD INVOLVE COMPLETE BRITISH DISENGAGEMENT.

4. LIBERAL LEADER JEREMEY THORPE NOTED THAT THE THREE DEATHS ADDED UP TO NINE LOSSES OF SECURITY FORCES IN SOUTH ARMAGH AND CALLED IT "ESSENTIAL" THAT SECURITY FORCES SHOULD REASSERT THEIR AUTHORITY AND INCREASE THEIR NUMBERS ON PATROL. ORME RESPONDED THAT SIZE OF PATROLS WAS OPERATIONAL QUESTION FOR SECURITY FORCES AND SAID THE POLICY OF SECURITY FORCES WAS UNDER DISCUSSION BETWEEN SECRETARY OF STATE REES AND ARMY LEADERS.

5. LABOR MP MENDELSON EMPHASIZED FACT THAT INCIDENT RELATED DIRECTLY TO ABILITY OF TERRORISTS TO OPERATE ON BOTH SIDES OF BORDER WITH IRISH REPUBLIC AND CALLED ON CONVENTION TO DEMAND EFFECTIVE COOPERATION BETWEEN THE TWO ARMIES. OPME SAID COOPERATION UK HAD ASKED FOR IS FORTHCOMING AND IS NOT BEING HAMPERED BY ACTIONS OF IRISH GOVERNMENT.

6. ULSTER UNIONIST IAN PAISLEY ASKED WHAT GOVERNMENT POLICY WAS ON RESPONDING TO ATTACK FROM ACROSS THE BORDER AND ON PURSUIT OF GUNMEN SOUTH OF THE BORDER. HE ALSO CORRECTED THORPES FIGURE OF NINE ARMY LOSSES TO FOURTEEN. ORME CONFIRMED PAISLEY'S FIGURE AND RESPONDED THAT ARMY IS OPERATING IN SECURITY SITUATION "WITH NO RESTRICTIONS FROM GOVERNMENT".

7. LABOR MP ENGLISH HIGHLIGHTED LACK OF COMMUNICATIONS WITH UNIT AND FACT IT WAS NOT REINFORCED WHEN IT CAME UNDER FIRE. OPME SAID SUPPORT WAS GIVEN AS RAPIDLY AS POSSIBLE AND THAT EXACT DETAILS OF INCIDENT MUST AWAIT RECOVERY OF SERIOUSLY WOUNDED SURVIVOR.

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8. CONSERVATIVE MP CHURCHILL, ONE OF WHOSE CONSTITUENTS DIED IN THE INCIDENT, ASKED GOVERNMENT HOW MUCH LONGER IT WILL PRETEND TO EXISTENCE OF A CEASE-FIRE WHICH IS PATENTLY NON-EXISTENT. HE CONTRASTED THE 19-YEAR-OLD PRIVATE (AND HIS BEREAVED PARENTS) WITH "SPINELESS AND GUTLESS POLITICIANS" WHO BETRAY THE GALLANTRY AND SACRIFICE OF OTHERS. ORME RESPONDED THAT CHURCHILL'S REFERENCE WAS "TOO DESPICABLE TO REPLY TO". GOVERNMENT WAS INTERESTED

IN PREVENTING A CONTINUING ESCALATION OF THE PROBLEM AND
IN FINDING A SOLUTION. GOVERNMENT POLICY, THEREFORE, WAS
AIMED AT A POLITICAL SOLUTION WHICH WOULD MEAN SOLDIERS
WOULD NOT BE KILLED AND THAT PEOPLE IN NORTHERN IRELAND,
WHATEVER THEIR RELIGION, CAN BE TREATED ON AN EQUAL BASIS.
TYPE OF REMARKS CHURCHILL HAD MADE, ORME SAID, WERE NOT

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HELPFUL.

9. COMMENT: IN PRIVATE CONVERSATION WITH EMBASSY OFFICE
AND VISITING DEPARTMENTAL OFFICER NOVEMBER 20 (TWO DAYS
BEFORE LATEST INCIDENT IN SOUTH ARMAGH), AIREY NEAVE SAID
THAT CONSERVATIVES CONTINUED TO SUPPORT BIPARTISAN POLICY
IN WORKING TOWARD SOLUTION OF IRISH PROBLEM. HE WAS
CRITICAL OF RELEASE OF DETAINEES AND CITED INABILITY OF
GOVERNMENT FORCES TO CLEAN UP SITUATION IN SOUTH ARMAGH.
THUS, EVEN BEFORE LATEST INCIDENT CONSERVATIVE PARTY
WAS ALREADY FOCUSED ON SOUTH ARMAGH AS POINT OF ATTACK ON
GOVERNMENT POLICY.

10. WITH REGARD TO SOUTH ARMAGH PROBLEM, NEAVE TOLD EM-
BOFFS THAT IRISH POLICE (RUC) SHOULD BE STRENGTHENED AS

PERMANENT SOLUTION, WITH A MUCH STRONGER ARMY CAMPAIGN AGAINST TERRORISM IN THAT AREA AS AN IMMEDIATE PRIORITY. NEAVE CITED IRA CONTROL IN SOUTH ARMAGH AS "RIDICULOUS", REFERRING TO THE NECESSITY OF SCHOOL CHILDREN TO GET IRA PASSES TO RIDE SCHOOL BUSES. STRENGTHENING OF POLICE WAS LONG-RANGE PROJECT, NEAVE SAID, AND WOULD NOT BE POSSIBLE IN SHORT-RUN.

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11. CONSERVATIVES, NEAVE SAID, ARE ANXIOUS FOR PRODUCTION AND CIRCULATION OF STORMONT REPORT AND HOPE STORMONT CAN BE PUT BACK TO WORK BEFORE END OF YEAR. NEAVE MADE A POINT OF INSISTING THAT BIPARTISANSHIP POLICY ON NORTHERN IRELAND CONTINUES TO EXIST IN SPITE OF CONSERVATIVE PARTY DIFFERENCES ON SPECIFIC GOVERNMENT POLICIES. IT WAS IMPORTANT THAT THESE DIFFERENCES SHOULD NOT BE SO MAGNIFIED BY THE MEDIA AS TO GIVE SUPPORT TO THE IRA, A REMARK WHICH IN RETROSPECT APPEARS PARTICULARLY PRESCIENT IN THE AFTERMATH OF THE PARLIAMENTARY DEBATE.

12. NEAVE MADE A SPECIAL POINT IN HIS CONVERSATION WITH EMBASSY OFFICERS OF STRESSING MRS. THATCHER'S INTEREST IN THE NORTHERN IRELAND PROBLEM AND THE SUCCESS OF HER RECENT TRIP TO BELFAST. HE HIMSELF MAKES FREQUENT VISITS TO NORTHERN IRELAND AND IS IN FREQUENT CONTACT WITH VARIOUS PERSONALITIES AT DIFFERENT LEVELS IN THE ULSTER UNIONIST PARTY.
RICHARDSON

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